



## Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The [California Open Educational Resources Council](#) has designed and implemented a faculty review process of the free and open etextbooks showcased within the California Open Online Library for Education ([www.cool4ed.org](http://www.cool4ed.org)). Faculty from the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California were invited to review the selected free and open etextbooks using a rubric. Faculty received a stipend for their efforts and funding was provided by the State of California, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Textbook Name:

### Writing for Success



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Textbook Author:  
Scott McLean

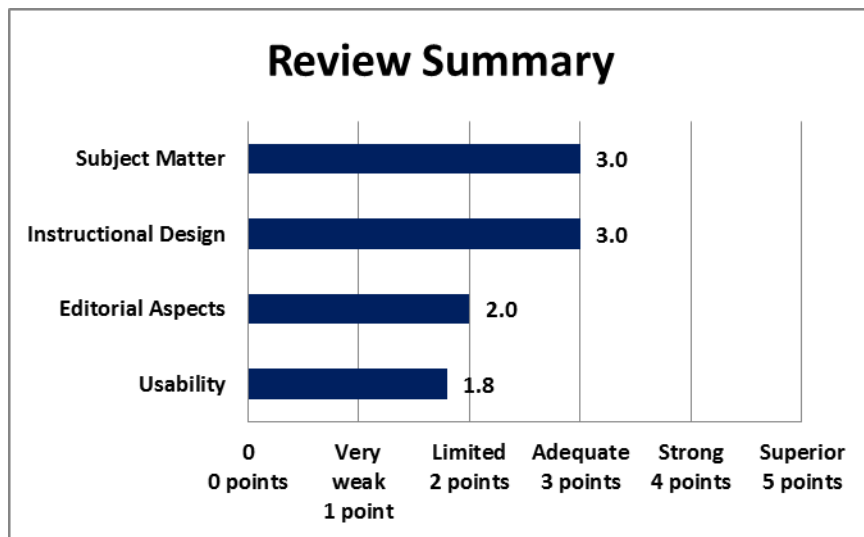
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Format  
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Date Reviewed:  
March 2015

### California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: [ENGL 105](#)

Subject Matter (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the content accurate, error-free, and unbiased?					X	
Does the text adequately cover the designated course with a sufficient degree of depth and scope?				X		
Does the textbook use sufficient and relevant examples to present its subject matter?				X		

Does the textbook use a clear, consistent terminology to present its subject matter?				X		
Does the textbook reflect current knowledge of the subject matter?				X		
Does the textbook present its subject matter in a culturally sensitive manner? (e.g. Is the textbook free of offensive and insensitive examples? Does it include examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds?)			X			

Total Points: 18 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of the subject matter of this textbook:

- It's unrealistic and maybe even biased on p. 70 where there's a mock ad for Terra Services with an "s" improperly placed after two verbs--as an example of an error-ridden ad that reduces potential clients' respect for a company. But the apostrophe is well placed, as is the dependent verb phrase, and other sentence boundaries are correct. It seems like a mockery of a dialect, as improperly adding "s" is not a pervasive subject-verb agreement error for students from most linguistic backgrounds. I also don't care for the way that the book answers so many questions without allowing space for diverse, critical thinking. For example, it asks "Would you call this company? Probably not?" instead of "Would you call this company? Why or why not?" Page 89 promises that saying "Donnie and I" instead of "Me and Donnie" "will enhance your professional image and reputation." I sense it's false promise and am uncomfortable with the classist implications--again not asking students their views but telling students what to think in a non-nuanced way. I have to say in Chapter 5 the authors do handle "ain't" more professionally!
- The Chapter (4) on Word Choice is disappointingly basic and overwhelming with list after list of commonly confused words, commonly misspelled words, etc. and lacks information about current research on collocations, corpus data freely available to students online, etc.
- Chapter 5 for Multilingual Writers is, surprisingly, better than the earlier chapters although it has some of the flaws of Chapters 1-4 in terms of covering so much with little input from readers.
- It is up to date in terms of the writing process; however, the book is out of date in terms of teaching grammar, word choice, and technology links.

Instructional Design (35 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Does the textbook present its subject materials at appropriate reading levels for undergrad use?			X			
Does the textbook reflect a consideration of different learning styles? (e.g. visual, textual?)				X		
Does the textbook present explicit learning outcomes aligned with the course and curriculum?				X		
Is a coherent organization of the textbook evident to the reader/student?				X		
Does the textbook reflect best practices in the instruction of the designated course?				X		
Does the textbook contain sufficient effective ancillary materials? (e.g. test banks, individual and/or group activities or exercises, pedagogical apparatus, etc.)				X		
Is the textbook searchable?					X	

Total Points: 21 out of 35

Please provide comments on any aspect of the instructional design of this textbook:

- The introduction does lay out the reasons behind the structure, but I wonder why Grammar is Chapter 2 and Punctuation Chapter 3 instead of Chapters 12 and 13, as it seems students need to delve into writing before they start editing their sentences for errors!
- Students in ENG 105: I see the tone as boring but useful for non-traditional (older) students or students who are juggling work and family, as the textbook examples are clearly oriented toward job skills with much reference to the employer's expectations. Chapter 6 explicitly says "office workers." Writing at Work sections are sprinkled throughout chapters -- an applied real-world scenario.

- Chapter 1 goes over the very basics in a basic voice--again not engaging the reader so much as listing advice regarding how to read, study, manage time, etc. It seems like a good book for community college perhaps but a little low level for the second composition course. I also see the book as useful in a study skills course/workshop.
- It seems like the first half is comprised of re-hashed material from a writing style guidelines book rather than a critical thinking text most appropriate for ENG 105 though an ancillary book on style could of course be adopted. I find this one low level, however.
- There are a few useful flow charts and diagrams, such as the ones showing how to identify a fragment and the ones demonstrating different ways to organize an essay.
- It is searchable with the "Find" function but not in a more advanced way that would allow clicking on links.

<b>Editorial Aspects (25 possible points)</b>	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the language of the textbook free of grammatical, spelling, usage, and typographical errors?					<b>X</b>	
Is the textbook written in a clear, engaging style?				<b>X</b>		
Does the textbook adhere to effective principles of design? (e.g. are pages laid out and organized to be clear and visually engaging and effective? Are colors, font, and typography consistent and unified?)			<b>X</b>			
Does the textbook include conventional editorial features? (e.g. a table of contents, glossary, citations and further references)		<b>X</b>				
How effective are multimedia elements of the textbook? (e.g. graphics, animations, audio)	<b>X</b>					

Total Points: 10 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook:

- I've only spotted one error so far on p. 40 (typo -- missing word).
- No Table of Contents until the narrative paragraph toward the end of the Introduction in Chapter 1. It starts abruptly, and there's no clear title page nor author nor cover image.
- In a quick piece, it explains why use of "I" may be discouraged but never shows when use of "I" could be desirable or work better! It gives a weak definitely need to delete example only: "I think smoking is bad!" First of all, it's a poorly written sentence in academia...

<b>Usability (30 possible points)</b>	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the textbook compatible with standard and commonly available hardware/software in college/university campus student computer labs?					<b>X</b>	
Is the textbook accessible in a variety of different electronic formats? (e.g. .txt, .pdf, .epub, etc.)		<b>X</b>				
Can the textbook be printed easily?		<b>X</b>				
Does the user interface implicitly inform the reader how to interact with and navigate the textbook?				<b>X</b>		
How easily can the textbook be annotated by students and instructors?	<b>X</b>					

Total Points: 9 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.

- The textbook only appears to be available online though the url is a pdf. I'm not sure how to download it. The exercises are static. It actually says, "Take out a piece of paper to do these exercises," so though I'm reading online, I cannot have any interactive feedback, and there's no website/url to click on either.
- Neither links to resources such as recommended dictionaries nor to corpora that enable students to become language investigators and search for word choice collocations are mentioned.

- The formatting contains a highlight of passages that are sample writing followed by commentary, but the frequent lack of different fonts or set-aside boxes makes it hard to distinguish the different parts of the text from one another. Occasionally there is a set-aside sample of writing that is written in slanted script that is supposed to look handwritten, and even on a very large screen I find it difficult to read, and I have good vision!

Overall Ratings						
	Not at all (0 pts)	Very Weak (1 pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3 pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
What is your overall impression of the textbook?			X			
	Not at all (0 pts)	Strong reservations (1 pt)	Limited willingness (2 pts)	Willing (3 pts)	Strongly willing (4 pts)	Enthusiastically willing (5 pts)
How willing would you be to adopt this book?	X					

Total Points: 2 out of 10

## Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?

- Once more than half way through the book (Chapter 8), the exercises are more useful with questions for students to use in revising their drafts for conciseness, coherence, and grammar; the text also includes a template for engaging in peer response that focuses on clarity and strength of the argument. Process writing is covered well both in terms of a thesis-driven argument within narrow confines and for the research paper. Using sources is only finally covered in Chapters 11 & 12 on Research--the two strongest chapters of this textbook by far. The sample research paper in APA is useful, as is Chapter 13 where APA and MLA are treated extensively and verbs suggested for introducing quotes are included.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?

- The textbook is not focused on critical thinking but is rather a companion writing style/editing book that would accompany a text on higher order thinking. The way this textbook is written does not even encourage high order thinking so much around grammatical, lexical, and syntactical choices, and of course these stylistic questions require a great amount of critical thinking, discussion, and practice around voice!
- The answering of questions for students drives me crazy. For instance, in chapter 9 it asks whether students ever had trouble following a friend's story and then assumes why (lack of cohesive devices or sequencing) instead of leaving that open to discussion... and then suggesting some reasons. There's no time or place marked for thinking/reflecting here.
- Only finally in Chapter 8 is prewriting/brainstorming covered and Chapter 9 thesis statement, so to use this book I would have to teach chapters out of order. The book does list some useful cohesive devices in terms of adverbs, transition expressions, and prepositional phrases though they are peppered through 3-4 chapters, so you'd have to harness the text (that is free!) and adapt it, assigning certain pages and parts together that are separate in the book. While the Oral Presentation assignment is outlined well in Chapter 14, the book does not address the tremendous multi-modal options available today like PowerPoint and Prezi and how to use those effectively.

We invite you to add your feedback on the textbook or the review to [the textbook site in MERLOT](#)  
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